

tance to centralized power.

Greenberg says that without a Roma rights movement, there is little hope of achieving integration. Roma scarcely participate in politics at all. There is only one Roma member of the European Parliament, and Roma across the board vote in very low numbers. To complicate matters, some Roma don't support desegregation, fearing that it will lead to assimilation and the loss of their cultural heritage. It's time to put an end to this, says Greenberg. "Europe has dithered long enough with one of the gravest humanitarian and economic crises of our time."

## OTHER NATIONS

## Asia's Dying Death Penalty

**THE SOURCE:** "Asia's Declining Death Penalty" by David T. Johnson, in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, May 2010.

OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS, THE prevalence of capital punishment around the world has decreased dramatically. By 1970, a total of 21 countries had abolished capital punishment. Today, 103 have done so, and 36 more have the death penalty on the books but have not executed anyone in at least 10 years. In Europe, Central and South America, and Africa, capital punishment is exceed-

## EXCERPT

### A Pox on Islands?

*An island is a bit of earth that has broken faith with the terrestrial world. This quite naturally gives rise to concern about the reliability and goodwill of these landforms, which have so clearly turned their back on geographical solidarity. Creeping anxiety along these lines likely accounts in some measure for the prominence of islands in the robust literatures of betrayal, solitude, madness, and despair. One is abandoned on islands (Ariadne, Philoctetes), trapped on them (Odysseus, repeatedly), and subjected thereupon to the whims of lunatics (e.g., the islands of doctors No and Moreau). Prisons and penal colonies abound, encircled by an oceanic moat: Devil's Island, Alcatraz, Rikers, Robben Island, Saint Helena, Guantánamo.*

—D. GRAHAM BURNETT, a historian of science and editor of *Cabinet* (Summer 2010)

ingly rare. There remain four death penalty strongholds: the United States, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Asia. Asia, home to 60 percent of the world's population, accounts for more than 90 percent of the executions of recent years.

Still, the death penalty's prevalence in Asia is diminishing, writes David T. Johnson, a professor of sociology at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. Of 29 Asian jurisdictions, just 13 have capital punishment and only four—China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Singapore—use it with any frequency. These countries do not provide official data on the number of executions (in China it's a crime to disclose that figure), but Johnson says that China "probably" executed an

average of 15,000 people a year between 1998 and 2001. Singapore, with a population only a little larger than Houston's, executed upward of 70 people in 1994 and 1995, approximately as many as Houston did for the entire period from 1976 to 2004—and Houston is "the most aggressive executing jurisdiction in the most aggressive executing state in the most aggressive executing democracy in the world." Fifty-two people were executed in the United States in 2009.

In the last few years the number of executions has fallen dramatically, with just 14 in Singapore between 2005 and 2008 and perhaps as few as 5,000 a year in China by

2008. Many countries (including India, Japan, Thailand, and Muslim-majority nations such as Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Indonesia) have instituted temporary death penalty moratoriums in recent decades.

There are two causes behind capital punishment's decline in Asia, and they're the same two that have driven executions down around the world: the fall of authoritarian regimes (which explains abolition in Cambodia, East Timor, and the Philippines) and the ascent of left-liberal parties (which explains execution rate declines in South Korea and Taiwan). The absence of these two factors in Japan may account for continuing use of the death penalty there, Johnson says.

One “noncause”: public opinion. “There is strong support for capital punishment everywhere in Asia where the issue has been studied—whatever the execution rate,” Johnson notes. The push for abolition tends to come from the “very top of the power structure.” It’s a delicate irony: Democracies tend to do away with the death penalty, despite widespread support for it.

OTHER NATIONS

## South Africa’s Staying Power

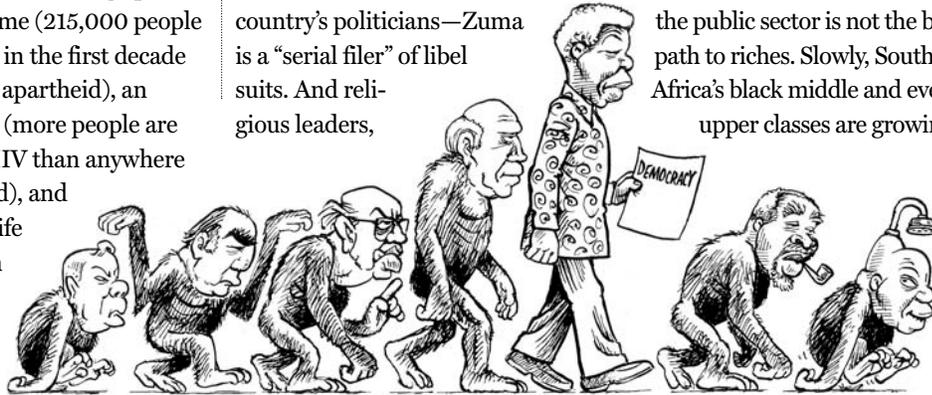
**THE SOURCE:** “State of Play: How South Africa Became South Africa” by Matthew Kaminski, in *World Affairs*, July–Aug. 2010.

IS THE YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN democracy at risk of falling apart? Widespread crime (215,000 people were murdered in the first decade after the end of apartheid), an AIDS epidemic (more people are infected with HIV than anywhere else in the world), and a government rife with corruption (the current president, Jacob Zuma, disbanded the police’s anti-corruption unit upon taking office) certainly stain the miracle of the peaceful transition to full democracy in 1994. But though the political system is “borderline rotten,” the fruit around the pit is healthy, argues *Wall Street Journal* editorial board member Matthew Kaminski. An independent press, a large nongovernmental organi-

zation (NGO) sector, religion, and private business are all thriving. “These ingredients give hope that South Africa will be able to consolidate its still fragile democracy,” Kaminski writes.

In South Africa’s democracy, only one party, the African National Congress, wins elections. But the ANC’s power does not go unchecked. A robust civil society grew out of the movement that ended apartheid; its various parts—newspapers, activist organizations, churches—have become “surrogate checks and balances to complement those that are ostensibly provided in the constitution.” There are more than 26,000 registered NGOs, and many are effective at both providing services the government doesn’t and advocating for better policies. Active news media get “under the thin skin” of the country’s politicians—Zuma is a “serial filer” of libel suits. And religious leaders,

communist ANC and the formerly all-white business community. In 1991, after his release from prison but before he became the nation’s first president, Mandela said, “The private sector must and will play the central and decisive role in the struggle to achieve many of the [transformation] objectives. . . . We are determined to create the necessary climate that the foreign investor will find attractive.” As president, Mandela governed accordingly. The ANC “inherited a debt-ridden state, a closed economy, and a strong but white-dominated private sector. In a few years, budgets were balanced, trade opened, the rand made convertible, and numerous state companies sold.” Before the global recession began in 2008, growth had averaged five percent per year. In contrast to the situation in other African nations, in South Africa, the public sector is not the best path to riches. Slowly, South Africa’s black middle and even upper classes are growing.



A critic of President Jacob Zuma depicts the evolution of South Africa’s democracy.

such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, are among the ANC’s loudest critics.

A growing private sector is another stakeholder the ANC must now answer to. With Nelson Mandela’s leadership, the transition from apartheid fostered warm relationships between the once quasi-

Over time, economic growth will “produce voters who yearn for responsive government that won’t endanger their livelihoods,” Kaminski believes. In the end, the ANC’s economic policies may someday lead to its own downfall, as the political system stabilizes and more parties emerge.